

MARIA CANTWELL
WASHINGTON



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

April 6, 2006

The Honorable Pete Domenici
Chairman
Senate Energy & Natural
Resources Committee
364 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510


The Honorable Jeff Bingaman
Ranking Member
Senate Energy & Natural
Resources Committee
364 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Domenici & Senator Bingaman,

I write to respectfully request that the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee hold hearings on the federal role in siting off-shore alternative energy projects. As you know, this issue has surfaced within the context of the 2006 Coast Guard Authorization legislation (H.R. 889), in which a narrow provision has been proposed to target a controversial off-shore wind project in Nantucket Sound. I believe this provision—and the general issue of siting off-shore energy projects—must be viewed within the context of other laws and precedents that determine the role of states in making these decisions, and thus deserves greater public debate and the additional scrutiny an Energy Committee hearing might provide.

I am also aware of your concerns about this provision in view of Section 388 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, enacted last August. This measure requires the Secretary of Interior, in consultation with the Secretaries of Defense, Commerce and the agency in which the Coast Guard is operating, to issue regulations for siting off-shore alternative energy projects within 270 days. There appears to be a great deal of uncertainty regarding how this process will work, the proper role of the states, the opportunities for public input, and how Interior intends to treat pending project applications. A hearing that puts all the facts on the record, considers all the legal precedents regarding the balance of federal and state authorities, and perhaps even draws on successful, international siting models would be a very welcome addition to this debate.

Sincerely,


Maria Cantwell